Telephone facilities in Post Offices of A.P.

3006. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether all the post offices including those located in far off rural and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh are having telephones;

(b) if not, the details of the post offices in the State where this facility is yet to be provided; and

(c) by when all the post offices in the State would be provided with Telephones?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Import of edible oil

3007. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have to shell out extra $ 450 million to import more edible oil this year to compensate the shortfall in oil seeds production;

(b) if so, whether Government had to spend $ 2,500 million on import of edible oil between October, 2001 and September, 2002 against usual annual import bill of $ 2,000 million;

(c) if so, the reasons for the shortfall in edible oil production; and

(d) the steps being taken to improve the production of edible oil in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Some of the reasons for the shortfall in edible oils are:—

(i) Crushing of oilseeds namely, Mustard/rapeseed, Groundnut and Sesame is reserved under Small Scale Sector and Oilseed Growers' Co-operatives. The capacity utilization generally ranges from an average of 10% for the ghanis (small-scale sector) to around 30% in case of the expellers in the organized sector.

(ii) Unrestricted growth in the industry consequent upon de-licensing of the vegetable oil industry.

(iii) Creation of capacity totally incommensurate with availability of raw materials.

(iv) Obsolete Technology.

(v) Very low margin because of stiff competition, inefficiency of operations etc.

(vi) Speculative nature of trade.

(vii) Mismatch between (low) raw material production and (high) processing capacity leading to a situation of too much capacity chasing too few raw materials (oilseeds).

(viii) Fragmentation of capacities, poor scale economies, large idle capacity.

(ix) High cost of raw material and processing renders products like edible and other oils uncompetitive and affects export prospects.

(x) Low priced imported oils eat into already fragile trade margins on domestic oils.

(xi) No wonder, the processing industry especially oil milling and solvent extraction suffers from pervasive sickness.

(d) The remedial measures taken and efforts made to increase the indigenous production of oilseeds and of edible oils include:-

(i) A Centrally Sponsored Oilseeds Production Programme is implemented in 25 States covering 395 selected Districts to increase the production of oilseeds edible oils in the country.

(ii) A Technology Mission on Oilseeds is in place to harness appropriate production, processing and management technology.

(iii) Intensification of research efforts to increase the production of oilseeds.

(iv) Increasing the areas under non-traditional oilseeds crops, like soyabean and sunflower and exploitation of oilseeds of tree and forest origin, rice bran etc.

(v) Setting up of necessary processing and infrastructural facilities to keep pace with the production programme of oilseeds.

(vi) Assistance for oil palm development.

(vii) Better incentives to producers through fixation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) of major oilseeds.

(viii) Use of indigenous oils in the manufacture of Vanaspati to at least 25% of the production on a monthly basis is mandatory at present. Higher use of expeller mustard oil in the manufacture of Vanaspati upto 30% has also been allowed. The objective is to incentivise the farmers in terms of better returns for their production.

In order to harmonise the interests of domestic oilseeds growers, consumers and processors and to regulate imports of edible oils to the extent possible, the duty structure on edible oils is reviewed from time to time.

Pricing of Sugar

3008. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether a new formula has not been announced so far for pricing of sugar, country-wise;

(b) if so, whether Government had asked the CACP to come up with formula by July end;

(c) if so, what are the main reasons for delay in announcing the sugar cane policy formula; and

(d) by when it is likely to be announced?